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OCCUPATION--LANGUAGE LABORATORY DIRECTOR.

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TRUE PROFESSIONAL STATUS FOR A LABORATORY DIRECTOR, PLUS ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OF SUCH INSTRUCTION, WILL GIVE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ADEQUATE RETURN FOR THEIR INVESTMENT IN ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT. BY BEING INVOLVED IN IMPORTANT RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES, THE DIRECTOR OF A LANGUAGE LABORATORY CAN SERVE ALSO TO FREE THE TEACHER AND HELP HIM TO TEACH MORE EFFECTIVELY. TO ACHIEVE THIS, REQUIREMENTS FOR LABORATORY DIRECTORSHIP SHOULD BE EXPERIENCE WITH THE SELECTION, OPERATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF LABORATORY EQUIPMENT, A KNOWLEDGE OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING, AND AN INTEREST IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING. ONGOING DUTIES OF A LANGUAGE LABORATORY DIRECTOR SHOULD INCLUDE HANDLING LABORATORY PERSONNEL, RESEARCHING CURRENT INFORMATION AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN ELECTRONIC TEACHING EQUIPMENT, AND MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE FUNCTIONING OF THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY AS A MEANS OF INSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LANGUAGE PROGRAM. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "THE MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL," VOLUME 48, NUMBER 3, MARCH 1964, PAGES 151-154. (SS)

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Occupation: Language Laboratory Director

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THE language laboratory is now a part of every quality foreign language teaching program. But satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the results of laboratory teaching is often contingent upon administrative support of such instruction. In far too many institutions today the laboratory remains a part-time or over-time job for a member of the teaching staff who is denied adequate technical and clerical assistance, who is the target of all parties in any internal disagreements on methodology, and who in general is loaded with responsibility without authority. If our colleges and universities are to realize an adequate return on their not inconsiderable investment in electronic equipment the time is at hand for a new breed of Language Laboratory Director who can bring to his job a true professional status thus freeing the foreign language teacher (and perhaps the English teacher, the music teacher, the speech teacher?) to teach and helping him to teach more effectively. Since the vogue for "work analysis" and "job description" is spreading from civil service and industry to the campus it is perhaps appropriate to set down those duties which properly belong to the administrative head of a laboratory or laboratories serving several languages as well as some mention of those responsibilities which should not be his.

The director need not be an electronics expert nor a technician, but he should have sufficient experience in laboratory operations to appreciate the technical problems involved in the selection, operation and maintenance of equipment. He should also have considerable personal experience as a second language teacher and learner and have a genuine personal interest in the goals and methods of language

instruction at all levels. He should remain constantly aware of past and present developments in the art of foreign language teaching while striving at the same time to project and contribute to future developments in this and related areas. He should be able to maintain successful inter-personal relationships with a broad range of individuals of different backgrounds, interests and training. Above all he will need a sense of humor if he is to cope with the frustrations of Murphy's Law of Electronics ("If anything can go wrong, it will.") and the often conflicting claims of his clientele.

In the listing which follows I would like to revert to the military distinction between an "accountable" and a "responsible" officer. Many of the activities described should properly be performed by a competent secretary, an electronics technician, or even an undergraduate student assistant—and such individuals are needed and should be held accountable for the proper performance of the activity. But with the growth of university staff and enrollments there is need for a "responsible" individual who will set the task for each one, see that it is properly performed in a way which will free the teaching staff from any housekeeping chores that might prove a hindrance to instruction. In addition to the supervisory function, which is largely administrative, the director should ideally be authorized to make policy decisions as to laboratory use and expansion, exercise fiscal control of its operation, conduct research into various aspects of equipment and its utilization, provide instruction for student assistants and interested language staff, offer courses in laboratory planning and methodology for prospective foreign language teachers. In view of the high turnover usual among campus non-professional staff he should provide continuity of operation to insure that the skills and know-how of one generation of student assistants need not be re-learned by every succeeding one.

Personnel administration. The laboratory director should be empowered, upon consultation with appropriate administrative and departmental representatives, to make recommendations concerning:

a) the number and kind of positions to be filled to insure efficient laboratory operation and support of the instructional program;
b) the recruitment, appointment, retention, promotion and termination of individuals to fill positions authorized;
c) the scheduling and apportionment of work tasks and, in the case of those not directly related to instruction, the supervision of their execution;
d) the maintenance of effective liaison with appropriate course chairmen in each of the target languages.

Research. The director should be charged not only with the collection of currently available information, but also with the development of new methods, equipment and techniques. In fulfilling these functions he will:

a) remain personally familiar with the pertinent current professional literature in his field;
b) maintain a suitably indexed collection of such literature which he will bring to the attention of colleagues in the various language departments and make readily available to them;
c) inspect and evaluate new developments in electronic teaching equipment through visits with salesmen, attendance at professional meetings and personal visits to laboratory installations in other institutions;
d) transmit to the teaching staff information concerning new techniques, equipment and materials which have been developed elsewhere;
e) initiate research, in conjunction with technical staff, intended to improve equipment design and functioning;
f) initiate and conduct research, in cooperation with instructional staff, on new or improved methods of foreign language teaching.

Planning, operations and training. Here again the laboratory director is central to cooperative endeavor.

a) He should make, and continuously review, short- and long-range projections of laboratory needs in terms of:
   1) laboratory floor space;

2) laboratory service areas;
3) number of student stations;
4) type and characteristics of program source;
5) flexibility;
6) potential efficiency of utilization;
7) personnel (or man-hour) requirement for laboratory administration;
8) instructional personnel to be supplied by the using departments;
9) future trends in laboratory usage;
10) need for special equipment or operations.

b) Concurrently he will find it necessary to conduct fiscal planning in order to convert projected material and personnel needs into budget requests. In addition to funds for building, "hardware", and people, such planning should include:
   1) funds for research to include purchase of published material, experimental equipment, provision for released time and travel;
   2) funds for the purchase and preparation of teaching materials where these are not properly chargeable to the using department.

c) The actual conduct of instruction in the laboratory should be under direct supervision of a representative of the language staff with the aid of one or more student assistants. But here the laboratory can assist by rendering these services:
   1) original preparation or programming of lesson tapes on the basis of syllabi prepared by the teaching staff;
   2) reproduction of materials as required;
   3) collation of test tapes for more efficient playback and evaluation;
   4) preparation of console and projection equipment prior to each drill session;
   5) proper recovery and storage of lesson material at the end of each session;
   6) daily periodic inspection of each student position and console and reporting defects to the maintenance staff.

d) The director should not be responsible for instruction in the laboratory. However one of his major responsibilities is instruction in the *use* of the laboratory. This may, and probably should be conducted both formally and informally. It should reach:
   1) members of the language teaching staff in each language offered (including those who remain sceptical about the value of laboratory teaching), plus interested faculty from other departments such as Speech, Music, Electrical Engineering, Business Practice (in some institutions the laboratory is used to teach shorthand !);
   2) prospective teachers of modern foreign languages;
   3) student assistants;
   4) in-service public school teachers, as the instructional program will permit.

Procurement, maintenance, and storage. Having determined the kind and amount of equipment needed, the director is responsible through appropriate university channels for the complete establishment and functioning of the laboratory.

a) He must order and procure supplies and equipment; this includes review of purchase orders to insure that they are filled promptly; inspection of supplies and equipment as received to ascertain that they fill the specifications of the purchase order; allocation of supplies and equipment received to the proper user; maintenance of a current inventory showing cost and location of all supplies and equipment on hand, cost and expected date of receipt of supplies and equipment on order (lesson materials, whether prepared locally or purchased are considered "equipment" for the purposes of inventory).

b) Maintenance would include the proper indexing and labelling of all lesson materials, initial and periodic inspection of equipment, the accomplishment of necessary repairs, the modification of equipment to improve functioning or meet specific need, the retirement and disposition of obsolete equipment.

c) The director should be responsible for the retrieval and proper storage of any instructional materials or equipment not actually in use. He must see that, through proper inventory control, it is immedi-

ately available when needed again. He must see that a storage areas are large enough, have proper shelving and containers, and that humidity and temperature controls are adequate for the protection of supplies and equipment. He should vigorously enforce a tape-retirement plan, arrange for salvage, sale or other disposition of any supplies and equipment no longer required by his own staff or the using departments.

In summary we may conclude that the Directorship of a University language laboratory should involve more than the clerical, technical, janitorial tasks of institutional housekeeping. It involves important research and instructional activities which must not be limited to one foreign language or group of languages if, as it should and must, it is to serve all. Implicit in the scope of these responsibilities is the conclusion that such a directorship is not only a full-time job *per se*, but that the effective and conscientious discharge of these responsibilities requires the cooperation and support of many.